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DOLLIE RADFORD AND THE ETHICAL AESTHETICS OF *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE* POETRY

By Ruth Livesey

> I got your poems, my dear Dollie. They made me sad. They make me think of the small birds in the twilight, whistling brief little tunes, but so clear, they seem almost like little lights in the twilight, such clear vivid sounds. I do think you make fine, exquisite verse . . . I hear your voice so plainly in these, so like a bird too, they are, the same detachment.
>
> — D. H. Lawrence to Dollie Radford, January 1916

A little bird, singing her song of personal subjectivity; "exquisite verse," rather than estimable poetry; a sprinkling of lights too dim to be true stars, detached from the world and all fading away into the twilight of a new age (Lawrence, *Letters* 2: 515–16). There is little difference between this appreciative letter of 1916 and the reviews of Dollie Radford's volumes of verse that appeared on their publication in the 1890s. As LeeAnne Marie Richardson has pointed out in her recent reconsideration of Radford's work, Radford's *A Light Load* (1891) and *Songs and Other Verses* (1895) were greeted with similarly decorous tepidity by reviewers at the time (109–11). The "trill and flutter of a song bird" the *Athenaeum* decreed; "slight," "simple," "pretty," "feminine," "spontaneous," "a tiny, fragile load indeed," Arthur Symons concluded for the *Academy* (Anon. a.189; Anon. b.378; Symons). At barely over six stone, that "pretty Dollie Radford" who crops up on the margins of so many memoirs of the *fin de siècle* could stand as a case in point of the body of the "poetess" being written into her verses by the eyes of the reviewers (Kapp 193). Radford herself was only too aware of – but interestingly, not that unhappy about – this persistent compression of women's poetry into the feminine body. As we shall see, Radford's works continually negotiated the circumscribed identity of the "poetess" and explored an alternative possibility for a woman poet at the turn of the century: that of a socially engaged yet feminised lyricism. On receiving her author's copies of *A Light Load* she concluded, rather archly, that it was "a very nice little book. I think I should be quite pleased with it if I met it unawares," only adding to this imagined drawing room encounter with her proper little body of work, "I wish it were not *so* small" (Radford Diary April 1891). Her fears were confirmed a few days later when she received a letter from her friend Symons letting her know of his review and adding how much he liked her "*small* volume" (Radford Diary April 1891).

Feminist scholarship over the past two decades has ensured that the tepid enthusiasm shown for Radford's works by D. H. Lawrence and Symons can be read as part of a wider

story about the fate of the late nineteenth-century woman poet in the era of early literary modernism. The reception of Radford's work thus can be read as representative of the erasure of nineteenth-century women's poetry from the twentieth century's acts of literary remembrance.[1] During the years of the 1914–18 war, whilst Lawrence struggled to publish his early novels, his practical difficulties were lightened by Radford, who arranged deliveries from London to Lawrence's Cornish outpost and then loaned Lawrence her Berkshire cottage for most of 1918. Lawrence and Frieda only managed to vacate the property when faced with the prospect of Radford arriving with her mentally unstable husband Ernest, whom Lawrence, with characteristic lack of circumspection, described as "the madman" (*Letters* 3: 218). Meanwhile, the twilight of D. H. Lawrence's moment of modernism put out the little lights of the verse of Radford and her peers by declaring such lyrics spontaneous, feminine, and essentially trivial: verses that were self-concerned but did not reflect on the nature of that lyric selfhood.

The story does not have to be told like this, however, and such a retrospective literary history in which all goes into the dark or under the hill of modernism underplays the extent to which Radford's poetics emerged from a structure of feeling particular to the late nineteenth century. Starting over again from the early 1880s places Radford's slender canon of verse within the radical socialist moment of aesthetic production in which she participated. It was a moment that instilled itself in the remembrance of the younger generation of modernist writers such as Lawrence, even if the specific political energies of the 1880s were dissipated by the early twentieth century. Radford's life and works challenge the easy critical ascription of an opposition between aestheticism and political commitment, the individuated pleasures of taste and the communal struggle for social change at the *fin de siècle*. She was both an active member of the revolutionary Socialist League in the 1880s and a poet whose publications with John Lane and contributions to the *Yellow Book* in the 1890s have led Talia Schaffer to identify her as a "forgotten female aesthete" (Schaffer 24–25). Her work thus sheds light on the tension between socialism and aestheticism in the late nineteenth century whilst underscoring the possibility of unlooked-for pluralism: politics and aesthetics might work in this case as a both/and rather than an either/or.

Trace Radford to the 1880s and 90s and she is to be found sitting under two distinct signs: a political banner and the careful engraving of an aesthetic frontispiece. On the one hand she appears in a photograph taken in 1887 of the Hammersmith Branch of the revolutionary Socialist League, led by William Morris (Figure 6). There, in the front row between May and Jenny Morris, sits the tiny figure of Dollie Radford. Radford had been convinced of the "seriousness and beauty of the socialistic movement," along with her friends the sisters Clementina, Constance, and Grace Black, after hearing Morris's lecture "How we Live and How we Might Live" in 1884 (Radford Diary November 1884). The following year Radford and her husband Ernest moved to Hammersmith from their former home in Bloomsbury largely in order to participate in Morris's socialist organisation; this was a political commitment they maintained alongside active membership of the ideologically distinct Fabian Society. The second illustration reproduced here is a copy of the frontispiece to Radford's volume of poetry, *Songs and Other Verses*, published in the high aesthetic imprint of John Lane, at the sign of the Bodley Head in 1895 (Figure 7). This, her second collection of poetry, was produced at a time of considerable strain for Radford. Ernest Radford suffered a severe nervous breakdown in 1892 from which, it appears, he never fully recovered, leaving the couple (and their three children) to scrape a living from writing and

Figure 6. The Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League, 1887. Radford sits third from left, facing forwards. Anonymous photograph courtesy of the People's History Museum.

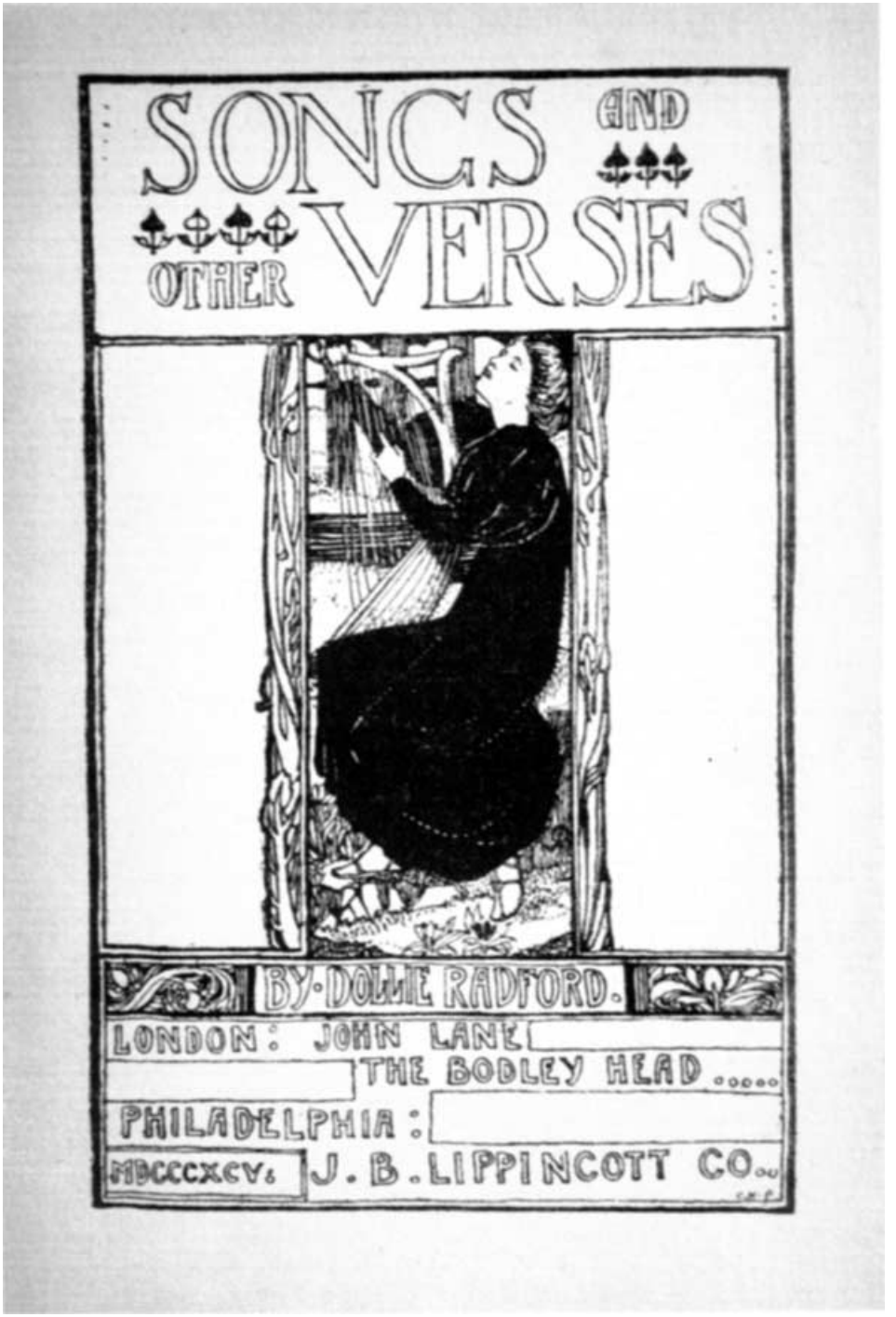

Figure 7. Frontispiece (possibly by Clemence Housman) for *Songs and Other Verses* by Dollie Radford. (London: John Lane, 1895.) Courtesy of the British Library.

the goodwill of their extended families as best they could. Here again we see Dollie Radford, but this time rendered as a pastoral woman poet with her lyre and puffy aesthetic sleeves. Hemmed in by the intertwining boughs of the border, the portrait emphasises the solipsistic pleasure of individuated lyric poetry. There are no signs of revolutionary socialism here: even her footwear, which might be seen as a witty allusion to the sandal-wearing championed by Edward Carpenter and other *fin-de-siècle* socialists, seems to be modelled on a classical pattern rather than any more radical fad.

It would be easy to speculate from these two signs that Dollie Radford abandoned her earnest commitment to collective radical politics in the mid-1880s for the individuated pleasures of aestheticism in the 1890s. But Radford's political reflections in her diary, in addition to her continuing membership of the Fabian Society, suggest that she maintained her socialist beliefs alongside her growing confidence in her identity as a poet. Radford's lyrics and ballads continue to negotiate the tension between aesthetics and politics during the 1890s. This tension is all the more palpable in Radford's work because what I have termed elsewhere as the communal socialist aesthetic, disseminated by writers such as William Morris and Edward Carpenter during the 1880s, placed such an emphasis on productive, manly labour (Livesey 603). Both the communal meetings of the Hammersmith Socialist Society and the aesthetes gathered under the sign of the Bodley Head thus proved problematic for Radford during the late 1880s and 90s as a result of their articulation of opposed, gendered aesthetics. Whilst aestheticism was underpinned by an aesthetic of consumption located in a sphere of strategically feminised taste, delectation, and individual responsiveness, the aesthetic disseminated by Morris within the socialist movement, however, emphasised production, manly labour and the effortful struggle to create communal subjects for the socialist era (Gagnier 13). Radford may have moved freely from the meeting hall to the salon, but her works reflect upon the inadequacy of either space to provide an aesthetic formulation which gave a home to engaged yet feminised aesthetic production. This article examines the extent to which Radford's poetics can be seen as an attempt to challenge this gendered opposition. Whilst several of Radford's lyrics explore how manly communal socialism overwrites a feminised sphere of individual affect and sympathy, others foreground the inadequacy of beauty and solitary contemplation in the long struggle for social change.

I

Radford's first significant success in publishing her verse in 1883 was inextricably linked to the Bloomsbury world of free-thinking ethical clubs and debating societies from which the socialist movement later drew many of its most prominent activists. Thanks to her friendship with Eleanor Marx and Clementina Black, Radford (or Caroline Maitland, to give her proper name in this period before her marriage) was increasingly drawn into the debates on atheism and ethics generated by the Progressive Association and G. W. Foote's radical secularist journal *Progress*. During the early 1880s Black and Radford drew this debate into their own circle of acquaintances, inviting several speakers to address the men and women's discussion club they organised on the question of the coming ethical order in the new age of agnosticism.[2] In 1883 Radford herself delivered a paper to the club entitled "To the Progressive Soul, true friendships are momentary" which seems to have applied the extreme subjectivism and temporality of Walter Pater's aestheticism to the sphere of ethics and human relations (Radford Diary May 1883).

If the radical flavour of such subjects of debate seems slightly dulled now, the fact of G. W. Foote's imprisonment for twelve months on a count of blasphemy during 1883 probably did something to clarify the edgy political position of the secularist movement to its members in the early 1880s. Edward Aveling, who was to become Eleanor Marx's common-law husband in 1884, served as interim editor of *Progress* during Foote's unavoidable absence and it was in his term of office that nine of Radford's poems appeared in the journal.[3] As Caroline Maitland or "C. M.," Radford's poems were published along with contributions from, among others, Ernest Radford and Eleanor Marx in a journal which liberally interspersed verse with crusading articles on the necessity of atheism and the disestablishment of the Church of England.[4]

Although *Progress* was a relatively new journal, its founding editor, Foote, looked back with some pride on the conjunction of secularist publishing and radical poetics in the later nineteenth century. He became a staunch defender, for example, of the atheistic legacy of James Thomson, whose *City of Dreadful Night* was first published in Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant's freethinking *National Reformer* in 1874. *Progress* secured permission to publish Thomson's literary remains from his executors, and, from Foote's return as editor in April 1884, Thomson's poetry and essays came to dominate the literary component of the journal. In a break with the older radical tradition of Chartist poetry however, the pages of *Progress* generally devoted considerable space to lyric poetry and relatively little to explicitly politicised hymns and ballads. Anne Janowitz has recently situated the radical poetry associated with the Chartist movement in a (long) nineteenth-century field of Romanticism and argued that many such works embody a formal dialectic between the labouring-class oral tradition of the ballad and the bourgeois interiority of the individuated lyric (28–31; 133–59). In contrast to such radical dialectic of the individual and communal – a dialectic poetics that was, as we shall see, sustained in many of the works published in contemporary socialist journals – the poetry in *Progress* was content to explore the parameters of subjectivity and individualism in conventional lyric form. This formal preference was, I argue, inextricably linked to the editors' ethical secularist agendas.

In the course of an extended review of Philip Bourke Marston's volume of poetry, *Wind Voices*, published in *Progress* in 1884, Edward Aveling concluded that "in this age of transition [to atheism] the task of the imaginative writer is difficult. He has to teach the great lesson of godlessness. But he has also to describe human beings" (135). Lyric poetry, so inalienably associated with reflection and interiority during the nineteenth century, thus assumed a particularly significant role in the age of secularisation. Such a form of imaginative writing was not merely a vehicle for the description of human beings, but a means of inscribing secular subjectivity. Lyric poetry, Aveling implied, could serve the new dissident belief system of atheism as humbly as it had established religion throughout the nineteenth century. In examining the intertwining of theology and poetics in the nineteenth century, Cynthia Scheinberg has concluded that such interdependence not only framed poetry as the "handmaid" of religion but also disseminated an ideal of the "poetic heart" as "a realm that privileges female and Christian identity" (51). The private virtues of Christian humility preached by poet-theologians such as John Keble, Scheinberg argues, are not only coded as feminine within the nineteenth-century logic of gender, but also concur with the affective language of the poetry of the heart. Whilst Foote's editorial policy was noted for its misogyny, as acting editor, Aveling oversaw the publication of numerous lyrics by women

poets, including Radford, that can be read as secular negotiations of this Christian tradition of the feminised "poetic heart."

Dollie Radford's poem "The Starlight Has Gladdened the River," published in *Progress* in October 1883 and not reprinted in her later collections, is typical of this secularised affective lyric. In the first stanza the lyric speaker reflects on her alienation from the beauty of the natural world around her:

> The starlight has gladdened the river,
> The moonbeams have silvered the sea,
> But lonely I stand in the midnight,
> No beacon has brightened for me.

The light shining down on the lyric speaker in this first stanza invokes a Christian poetic tradition in which the heavens above provide transcendent inspiration and the animating touch of some greater force, sparking the solid human clay on earth into spiritual life. Sparse and simplistic as it is, however, Radford's poem subverts this conventional order of things. The speaker does not yearn for heavenly light, but a humble "beacon" of human manufacture. The parity of that beacon with the speaker's subject position is emphasised by the internal rhyme which yokes it to the heavily endstopped "me" at the end of the line. The light of inspiration and love that completes the beauty of the earth is found in humanity, not in the heavens. The second and third stanzas of the poem extend this reading by exploring and denying the possibility that the "music" of the stars and the "poetry" of the moonlight might complete "the beauty" that is wanting in the speaker's vision of the evening.

The poem closes with a stanza that seems to typify the affective domestic realm prescribed for the nineteenth-century woman poet and this, in addition to some clumsy prosody in the final line, might indicate why Radford decided not to include the poem in her later collections. Nevertheless, the text gives a good indication of Radford's subtle subversions of even the most trite poetic conventions with the radical intellectual currents of her Bloomsbury circle:

> But I think in my own little valley,
> With the faces and scenes that I love,
> I shall there find the light that is wanting
> To perfect the beauty above.

The lyric subject returns to the firmly non-transcendental world of affective relations in which she finds perfection and completion. But the familiar domestic sentiments here should not obscure the important inversion of the conventional religious positioning of the giver and receiver of light, inspiration and beauty. Whilst the natural world "glows with a softened delight" thanks to the beneficent light from above, in the materially specific, social world of the valley the light of inspiration is generated from below and shines from human community. An ethical affect emanating from humanity completes the limited beauty of the naturalised heavens. As Martin Priestman has suggested, in a rather different context, within an atheist poetics "nature" accretes a new set of referents as an autonomous material system rather than as a source of some spirit more deeply interfused in its matter (7). Radford's poem

denies that lyric subjectivity is inspired from above and thus teaches the "great lesson of godlessness," as Aveling recommended. But Radford's alternative ideal is far from that of a self-authorising subject: her lyric shadows forth an idea of aesthetic creativity embedded in the affective heart of human(ist) community. The verse combines conventional feminised lyrical affect with a new secular ethical subjectivity.

Dollie and Ernest Radford's ventures in secularism stopped short of a whole-hearted advocacy of rationalist atheism, and, like many of their peers at the *fin de siècle*, the couple explored alternative belief systems to supplement the spiritual void.[5] Surprising though it may sound, the particular form taken by the developing socialist movement in the early 1880s offered one such alternative in an age of agnosticism. As Stephen Yeo has suggested, there was a distinct tendency within the British socialist movement of the 1880s and 90s that might best be characterised as the "religion of socialism" (5–7). In this political formation the prospect of material revolution intertwined with millenarian belief in a new life of ideal beauty outside capitalism. With poets such as William Morris and Edward Carpenter as its prophets, this aspect of the wider movement proved particularly attractive to the aesthetic secularist circles of 1880s Bloomsbury. Yet Dollie Radford was initially resistant to socialism, not least because it numbered some of her oldest friends among its most eminent advocates. It was Karl Marx who first observed the young Caroline Maitland paying "fearful court" to Ernest Radford at his daughter's play-reading club in April 1881, and Eleanor Marx continued to keep Dollie Radford abreast of developments in the socialist movement during sociable outings to the Turkish Baths in the early 1880s (Karl Marx 389–90; Radford Diary May 1883). Thanks to her friendship with Eleanor Marx, Dollie Radford was introduced to the editorial team of a new "scientific" socialist journal, *Today*. As members of the avowedly Marxist Social Democratic Federation, Ernest Belfort Bax and James Leigh Joynes aimed to create a very different forum from Aveling and Foote's radical secularist journal, but Radford was pained by the group's lack of charitableness and aesthetic sensibility.

Radford turned her mind to producing some verses for *Today*, despite her ambivalent attitude to "scientific socialism," after an encouraging meeting with Bax and Joynes in Eleanor Marx's rooms in January 1884. Even in these early months of the rebirth of the socialist movement in Britain, however, Radford was aware that her philanthropic social observations and unsystematic sense of social injustice marked her out from Marx's other visitors. Bax, in particular, was a notorious misogynist who claimed that women were simply incapable of turning their attention from their own love affairs to great social questions ("Woman Question" 25).[6] He directed his ire at what he termed "sentimental socialists" who were merely a manifestation of the "morbid self-consciousness of our Christian and middle-class civilisation run to seed": a solipsistic indulgence of young men and women who required a "stimulus" of some sort (*Religion of Socialism* 92, 100).[7] Radford was all too aware of how likely Bax was to reject her work on such grounds and her first step was to work through her sense of political dislocation with some humour in her diary:

> I have some verses in my head
> As many have, but then
> What is the use; I wish instead
> The same were in my pen.
> Oh I would write such stirring lines
> About the great To-morrow,

> And send them to the owners of
> "To-day" to ease their sorrow.
>
> What idle dreams! My simple writing lacks
> All qualities that Messrs Joynes & Bax
> Would most approve: in intimate relation
> I've been with Nihilists of every station
> And German socialists of every plan,
> But never have I known a working man.
> (Radford Diary January 1884)

Ever an astute judge of the periodical press and its editorial expectations, Radford anticipated that the sort of poetry required for *Today* would be very different from the secular affective lyrics published in *Progress*. It was not that *Today* was wholeheartedly devoted to expositions of *Das Kapital*, despite the journal's rather stern subtitle, "The Monthly Magazine of Scientific Socialism." The first volume contained the serialisation of George Bernard Shaw's *An Unsocial Socialist*, William Morris's "Art under Plutocracy," Edward Carpenter's *England's Ideal*, Edward Aveling on Ibsen, essays by Walt Whitman, Edith Simcox, Eliza Lynn Linton, Eleanor Marx, and poems by Ernest Radford and Havelock Ellis in addition to nihilist novels and socialist essays by the usual suspects such as Stepniak. It was rather that the journal required a vigorously material aesthetic in which poetry performed a triumphant march towards a future of labour. Idealist dreams evoking the "religion of socialism," such as Edward Carpenter's contributions to the journal, lacked sufficient rigour for Bax and Joynes and were published with an editorial disclaimer, disavowing the content as unscientific.

Today had a far higher proportion of female contributors than the increasingly chauvinist *Progress* ever did. It was in this forum that the Fabian socialist Edith Nesbit and her half-sister Saretta Green or "Caris Brooke" published a considerable number of socialist hymns and topical dramatic lyrics such as "The Husband of Today: The Wife of all Ages" (Nesbit 403).[8] Nesbit asserted that in contrast to her "published poems" which were "nearly all *dramatic lyrics*," only her "socialist poems are *real me*, and not drama" (Briggs 71). But as Nesbit in retrospect felt her "real" self to be sufficient for *Today's* needs, so at the time, Dollie Radford felt herself absurdly lacking in what the editors required. That affective discourse of the feminised poetic heart could not be further from the embodied labour of the "working man" that so eluded Radford's limited field of acquaintance in the radical drawing rooms of Bloomsbury. Nevertheless, Radford laboured on trying to produce something suitable, toying with a "Socialists' Hymn," during early 1884 (Radford Diary April 1884). I want to consider her "Two Songs" from *A Light Load*, which according to her diary she completed during this period, as a response to this pressure and the anti-affective thrust of masculinised scientific socialism she associated with Bax and the Social Democratic Federation (Radford Diary March 1884).

> Winds blow cold in the bright March weather,
> Yet I heard her sing in the street to-day,
> And the tattered garments scarce hung together
> Round her tiny form as she turned away.
> She was too little to know or care
> Why she and her mother were singing there.

Skies are fair when the buds are springing,
When the March sun rises up fresh and strong,
And a little maid, with her mother, singing,
Smiled in my face as she skipped along,
She was too happy to wonder why
She laughed and sang as she passed me by.

Stars are bright, and the moon rejoices
To pierce the clouds with her broken light,
But the air is heavy with childish voices,
Two songs ring through the clear March night –
Songs which the night with burning tears
Sings out again to the coming years.
(Radford, *A Light Load* 21)

Radford's "Two Songs" draws a motif of revolutionary poetics from the work of a writer to whom Radford "felt nearer than any" during the early 1880s, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and uses that motif to question the limits of heroic masculine radicalism (Radford Diary July 1883). Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" frames the autumnal West Wind as a dialectic "Destroyer and Preserver" which drives the seeds of future life to the ground, "Each like a corpse within its grave, until / Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow / Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth . . . " (ll. 8–10). Radford's "Two Songs" returns upon Shelley's ode by opening in that promised spring which closes his poem; but in "Two Songs" this is a spring that brings to light only urban fragmentation. In Shelley's text the dense interlocking of terza rima propels a turn from figuring the wind as the natural force of seasonal death and rebirth to the inspiration of a poetics of tangible social effects: "Be through my lips to unawakened earth / The trumpet of a prophecy!" ("Ode to the West Wind" ll. 68–69). Yet in Radford's urban spring of modernity, the March wind of the first stanza heedlessly blows past the singer on the pavement as an uncaring force of inevitable material change.

Radford's "Two Songs" reworks the conventional radical poetic association of the masculinised wind with a message of hope in political transformation by contrasting the impersonal force of March with the vulnerable, ignorant singer in the first stanza. The singer is no longer the unencumbered lyric self of Shelley's ode, but rather a child rooted in the marketplace, singing spontaneously, but singing for her supper nevertheless. The speaker of the first two stanzas observes the street singers at the level of the pavement and rather than aspiring to join the onward sweep of the March wind, couches a description of the scene in language that harks back to an earlier nineteenth-century tradition of women's philanthropic poetry; Radford's rendering of the tiny, vulnerable child forced to sing thus owes something to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children." In this instance, however, the form of child labour being criticised is in itself uncomfortably close to the recuperation of the aesthetic by capitalism and not the more thoroughly material indenture to the iron wheel of manufacture condemned by Barrett Browning. "Tiny," "little," "singing," "happy," and unknowing, the spontaneous child singers in "Two Songs" echo the familiar critical terminology of the spontaneous feminised "poetess" applied to Radford by her contemporaries and underscore the passivity of such a role. The two songs of the first two contrasting sesta rima stanzas are those of girl children in radically different social positions: the indigent beggar child and the happy "little maid" out for a walk with her mother. Yet

the final stanza suggests that both these singers will be condemned to join in chorus but still remain unheard in the long cycle of "the coming years." Radford might not know the working man, but here the lyric voice elides the distance between the woman poet and the working-class girl child under capitalism in order to examine the consequences of really not knowing why one is singing in public, of merely babbling meaningless song in the capitalist marketplace. I want to suggest that by means of this strategic identification the poem re-examines socialist hopes of change and questions the persistent deferral of the question of women's sexual exploitation within the movement.

The oppositional reworking of radical poetics can be traced through the dialectic of forms of time at work in the poem. In the second stanza the virile sun of early spring, "fresh and strong," encourages the little feminine buds of the "happy" little maid to blossom into precocious maturity just as the March wind exposes and penetrates the body of the "tiny form" of the working-class girl in the previous stanza. Despite the cyclical logic of the seasons, March here is linear, progressive, and developmental. In the final stanza, however, there is a very different form of time at work. Gravid assonance displaces the tripping consonance of the first two stanzas and the straining anapaests foreground that odd juxtaposition of "childish" and "heavy." The feminine moon rejoices, but is not to be looked to as an alternative source of authority to that of the "strong" March sun: she, perhaps like the late-nineteenth-century woman poet, is "broken" by her attempts to pierce the obscurity and lighten the streets below. In this nocturnal streetscape the two voices of the ignorant girl children have become one with the night itself, condemned to weep "burning tears." Given the public concern with prostitution and the sexual exploitation of children in London during the mid-1880s, it is possible to read these "burning tears" as an allusion to the physical hazards of women taking to the streets at night in the form of venereal disease. This heavy fruit of sexual knowledge is shared by women of all classes for endless "coming years," whilst the revolutionary promise of the March wind is implicated by its absence from this female cycle of sexual performance and commerce.

Almost exactly a year after Radford drafted "Two Songs," William Morris composed the opening poem of his epic *The Pilgrims of Hope*, "The Message of the March Wind" (Morris, *CL* 386). Anne Janowitz has recently restated the significance of "The Message of the March Wind" in the face of a critical tradition of apology and neglect by placing it within a radical dialectic of Romanticism. Morris's debt to Shelley is, Janowitz argues, "recuperative and revitalising" and "brings a poetic of lyric solidarity to bear upon the complex punctual and inward self of liberal hegemony" (31). If Morris's recuperative aesthetic endows the Romantic dialectic with new vigour, Radford's poem interrogates the limitations of a radical poetics that does not engage with the conventional topos of the feminine affective lyric and sweeps past the charitable object of sympathy on the street, unable to carry her message in its haste to the bright communal future. The sequence in which Radford republished "Two Songs" in *A Light Load* in 1891 emphasises this subjective critique. The preceding poem, "Why seems the world so fair, / Why do I sing?" explores the resources of the aesthetic in preparing for a world of hope in a future "Spring," and LeeAnne Marie Richardson has analysed the poem that follows "Two Songs," "What song shall I sing to you / Now that the wee ones are in bed," as a consideration of the domestic limitation of women poets (Richardson 112). Read between these two lyrics, "Two Songs" gains an even sharper political resonance. The lyric voice abruptly breaks off its affective rhapsody of hopeful domesticity in the surrounding poems, to listen to another tune. After this, the following poem's vision of children "tucked

away on a pillow white / All snug and cosy for the night" reads as anxious overstatement in the face of the material basis of affective domesticity.

Several months after she composed "Two Songs" Radford was convinced by William Morris that she was indeed a socialist. She had, she realised, been left cold by other leaders of the movement, such as Aveling, Bax, and H. M. Hyndman, because they were incapable of giving form to the beauty, as well as the seriousness of socialism (Radford Diary November 1884). As the mother of three young children during the rise of socialist activism in the 1880s and early 90s, Radford was well aware of the limits to her own engagement in the movement. Whilst her friends Eleanor Marx, Grace, Constance, and Clementina Black all went to the East End and made various attempts to organise labour and foster socialist discussion, Radford's involvement remained limited to the drawing-room meetings of Bloomsbury and Hammersmith. Yet that peculiarly aesthetic and idealist flavour of the "religion of socialism" during the 1880s enabled Radford to figure her own work as a contribution to the greater cause, providing the hope of beauty that was in itself a revolutionary force according to Morris. Inviting as Morris's aesthetic socialism was for Radford and her husband, however, the productivist communal ideal of socialist art disseminated by Morris sat awkwardly with Radford's attenuated lyrics and songs. The spaces of Morris's aesthetic socialism proved inhospitable to the individuated, feminised lyric voice and her second collection of poems negotiates its way through the communal political imperative of Morris's manly socialism and the highly wrought autonomy of aesthetic poetry.

II

Whilst Morris's socialist lectures, collected and published as *Signs of Change* in 1888 provide the clearest formulation of his productivist, communal aesthetic, his Utopian fiction *News from Nowhere* (1891) works through these theories and provides exempla of anti-individualist, post-revolutionary art. As Patrick Brantlinger suggests, *News from Nowhere* is a text preoccupied by the effects of communal socialism on aesthetic expression (35). The narrative form reflects a concern with the types of art and creative subjectivity that will be possible under socialism. Lyric poetry is nowhere to be found and the realist novel has disappeared along with its precondition of bourgeois individualism. In Nowhere the environment has become "our books in these days." Novels speak only of the sorrowful past of individualism in which "the hero and heroine [live] on an island of bliss" and work their way through "a long series of sham troubles . . . illustrated by dreary introspective nonsense" whilst the world labours on around them (Morris, *News* 129). Whilst the text rejects bourgeois individualist interiority as a repository of aesthetic truth, architecture takes up the narrative function of emotional complexity and embodied history: communal space displaces individual depth. "I console myself," Morris wrote in *Signs of Change*, "with visions of the noble communal hall of the future" when confronting the vulgar possessive individualism of the 1880s (Morris, *Signs* 32). Ellen, the most carefully realised (and interestingly eroticised) inhabitant of Nowhere, reaffirms her earlier contentions regarding the incomprehensibility of realist fiction when she reaches out to embrace the lichened wall of Kelmscott Manor towards the end of the novel. Rather than a conventional union between hero and heroine in defence against the world, the heroine's "shapely sun browned hand and arm" stretches out to a union with the world in the form of the house that has "waited for these happy days, and held in it the gathered crumbs of happiness of the confused and turbulent past" (174).

There is no chance of such a clinch for the visitor to Utopia, William Guest, the unmistakable bourgeois individual product of high capitalism, for Ellen's love is for "the earth . . . and all things that deal with it and grow out of it." At the end of the novel, then, Kelmscott Manor displaces the old individualism and interiority of romance and the heart is given over to the commonweal.

But it is not only the old private realm of romance that is displaced by communal architecture in *News from Nowhere*. Politics, too, is unindividuated in this Utopia and what Kelmscott Manor does for romance at the end of the novel, the site of Morris's Kelmscott House in Hammersmith does for politics at the beginning. As the narrator eats his breakfast after waking up in the Guest House, his eye is caught by "a carved and gilded inscription on the panelling" in the hall. It is the only instance of the written word that Guest encounters directly in Nowhere and he is "much . . . moved" by its simple statement:

> Guests and neighbours, on the site of this Guest-hall once stood the lecture room of the Hammersmith Socialists. Drink a glass to the memory! May 1962. (12)

The guest hall articulates a history that the younger inhabitants of Nowhere are unconcerned with, if not actively hostile towards. The space of socialist argument and education has become a place of pleasurable labour, but only the building memorialises the efforts of past individuals to bring about this new communal life. The inhabitants of Nowhere have no need to look forwards or backwards in a world in which history has come to rest in Utopia. However, the eloquence of space in *News from Nowhere* works by drawing out the contrasts between present and future whilst at the same time offering a parallel of spatial practices under capitalism and primitive communism: a parallel of which the inhabitants of Nowhere, with their lack of history, are unconscious. As the ancient church in Oxfordshire is used for a harvest celebration and the Houses of Parliament are linked by a naughty metonymy to their use in Nowhere as a dung market, so the Guest-hall echoes the past: this is a Utopian transformation of the meetings of the Hammersmith branch of the Socialist League.

Dollie Radford's record of evenings at the Hammersmith meeting hall provides a sense of the communal fellowship that Morris aimed to suffuse through his fellow socialists; but it also indicates how Morris's collective socialist aesthetics were at odds with Radford's interest in lyric poetry. The converted coach-house became a place of performance and celebration, with Morris himself as master of ceremonies.

> The 'At Home' of the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League. We went around to Mr Morris's and aided in putting the room in order . . . It was a very informal meeting – music – and recitations. Miss Morris sang to her guitar, & looked very beautiful, Ernest recited "Hiawatha" . . . with much success. I played "Chacone" & sang "Little Binks" with moderate success. A gentleman recited half of "The Revenge" & then broke down, another gentleman sang a song inviting the proletariat to revolt, & so on. – A very young socialistic babe was present. I wish Mr Morris were less noisy, his presence is so boisterous I feel its [sic] overpowering . . . Walter Crane is a member of the League & sent some of his pictures to adorn the walls . . . we sent them our cups & silver spoons! . . . In bed very late. (Radford Diary February 1886)

After joining the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League in January 1886 Radford's chief involvement lay with the educational and social side of the organisation. The fact that Radford did not take part in more active campaigns may not have been a choice on her part. The minute books of the branch make it clear that a gendered division of labour was in force in the organisation.[9] Whilst Morris, Emery Walker, Sidney Cockerell, and other men were in regular attendance at the Sunday evening meetings, Morris's daughter, May, was the only one of a considerable number of female members who participated at this level. It was May Morris who first suggested that the branch hold a social entertainment every few months and she formed part of a largely female committee responsible for organising these and other events.

Written in the cold light of day and feeling "rather seedy" the next morning, Radford's account of her evening out emphasises the very un-domestic nature of the Hammersmith Socialist Society "At Home." The working space of the coach house is filled by other people's possessions in a fiction of communality; the open invitation for all to contribute to the pleasure of the evening sets an uneven tone between concert and conversation; Morris's physical enthusiasm that all embrace this experience of fellowship sets the "socialistic babe" crying. Yet as Morris's vision of pleasurable existence in *News from Nowhere* suggests, the future of revolutionary socialism lies precisely in being "At Home" in such communal halls, mixed by age, class and gender. Morris's efforts to imagine the future of art under socialism continually returned to the idea of the workshop populated by parties of "merry young men and maids" finding a means to artistic expression without individualism through tradition and the pleasurable labour of the hand.

If Radford's attempt to class Morris's communal aesthetic as an "At Home" sits at odds with this noisy celebration of revolutionary socialism, then other socialist organisations in the capital did offer a mode of politics closer to such middle-class salon culture. The Fabian Society, of which Radford was also a member, developed its political strategy through the culture of the "At Home." The society's drawing-room meetings, emphasis upon political reform through permeation, and gentle manipulation of prominent politicians must provide a partial explanation of the prominence of women such as Annie Besant, Charlotte Wilson, and Emma Brooke on the Society Executive during the 1880s. By 1892 female Fabians were confident enough of their own standing to press for women-only shortlists and Radford's old friend Constance Garnett (née Black) served on the executive in 1894.[10]

With considerable ideological sleight of hand, George Bernard Shaw argued that it was the very nature of these Fabian Society drawing rooms that led to Morris's refusal to join the society. They simply never offered the aesthetic resources of hope so necessary for his revolutionary socialism. Morris, Shaw argued, "was an ungovernable man in the drawingroom [sic]" and would have been more out of place there "than in any gang of manual labourers or craftsmen. The furniture would have driven him mad; and the discussions would have ended in his dashing out of the room in a rage, and damning us all for a parcel of half baked, shortsighted suburban snobs, as ugly in our ideas as in our lives" (Shaw xviii). Despite the amenability of the Fabian Society to middle-class women activists and writers like Emma Brooke and Edith Nesbit, by the early 1890s Radford's own aesthetic interests had diverged from those of the increasingly research-driven Fabian Society. Ernest Radford served as secretary to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society from 1888 until 1892 and thanks to this post and his membership of the Rhymer's Club, Dollie Radford's cultural life shifted towards the late flowering of aesthetes rooted in the publishing houses of John

Lane and Elkin Matthews.[11] Yet although Radford's diary records her increasing interest in intellectual exchanges with her fellow poets, including Arthur Symons, "Michael Field," and W. B. Yeats, her aesthetic Sunday salons were also attended by her fellow socialists. The utopian socialists and sexual radicals Edward Carpenter, Kate and Henry Salt, for instance, joined in one of "Willie Yeats' . . . hypnotic experiments after supper" one evening in 1891 (Radford Diary April 1891). If merely holding hands across the void seems insufficient evidence of the developing co-articulation of socialism and aestheticism for Radford, then her continued reflections on Morris's work underscores that intellectual debt which Bruce Gardiner argues was shared by all members of this Rhymer's Club generation in the 1890s (Gardiner 36).[12]

Radford was filled with gratitude by the kind reception the Hammersmith socialists gave Ernest on his first visit after leaving the asylum in March 1893 and stated more clearly than ever her commitment to the socialist productivist aesthetic she saw at work in Morris's home:

> It is new life to find again the intensity & joy of art work. How much I wish every one could make one thing . . . that might live for always . . . I do know many people – sad and hopeless – creeping through their lives in a shell – shut up & withered – If they could have painted one picture – made one song – or done one little thing of their very own I think they would have awakened. It is all in [Edward Carpenter's poem] "Towards Democracy." Edward Carpenter understands well. (Radford Diary March 1893)

Although Radford could see a clear connection between the crafting of beauty and the future political ideal, both the communal space of the Hammersmith Socialist Society and the executive meetings of the Fabian Society became an increasingly ill fit to her circumstances and interests. By the mid 1890s Beatrice Webb decided that "aesthetic middle-class" women socialists such as Radford's sister-in-law, Ada Wallas (née Radford), with their "yellow-green sloppy garments . . . worn *on principle*" were distinctly "old fashioned" in the context of the sleek investigative machinery of the Fabian Society (129). Whilst Ernest Radford was able to develop the aesthetic and idealist aspect of Morris's socialism with his fellow socialist peers within the Rhymers Club, Radford's separation from the site of labour proved problematic in her attempt to situate her poetics in the context of her productivist aesthetic socialist beliefs. Some women socialist writers of the period, such as Olive Schreiner, found a means to refigure their work as "virile" (re)productive labour in response to the aesthetic model outlined by Morris, but Radford's attenuated lyrics proved less amenable to the aesthetic of communal production (Schreiner 258). As Janowitz has pointed out, the designation of so much of Morris's poetry as song and chant during the period alludes to a poetic mode out with the individualism and inwardness associated with lyric subjectivity: poetic form was in this sense politicised during the period (216–32).

III

Two of Radford's poems from her 1895 collection *Songs and Other Verses* negotiate this tension between the individuated form of the lyric and the communal productive aesthetic of socialism. The first, "If you will sing the songs I play," falls within a cycle of short lyrics in *Songs and Other Verses* addressing the fate of creativity when the love that sustained it is rejected. It is tempting, of course, to read such lyrics autobiographically in the light

of Ernest Radford's serious mental breakdown in April 1892 and subsequent periodic institutionalisation. But I want to suggest that in this particular poem Radford counterposes the individualism of the lyric with the status of song as a historicised, communal endeavour which so animated the versification of other poets of the socialist movement.

> If you will sing the songs I play,
> Then you shall be my dear,
> And I will cherish you alway,
> And love you far and near;
> If you will, in sweet singing, say
> The songs I play.
>
> And if to all my deeper strain
> A golden rhyme you learn,
> Ah me, to what a rich refrain
> My striving chords shall turn;
> If you will learn the deeper strain,
> The great refrain.
> (Radford, *Songs and Other Verses* 34)

"If you will sing" reflects Radford's increasing interest in, and proficiency with, experimentation in verse forms in her second volume of poetry. The poem's ostensible subject matter of the changing relationship between singer and song is matched by a stanzaic structure which echoes the *rentrement* of the medieval rondeau, traditionally sung to a musical accompaniment. In this case, however, each stanza adopts its own rhyme scheme and refrain which underscores the movement of the poem between two alternative models of the relation between singer and accompanist, or, by extension, poet and muse, in the making of song. The first stanza could be read as a troubling love lyric in which love itself is conditional upon the "sweet" singer's compliance with the accompaniment of the speaker. The speaker will love the singer only if she follows his or her tune and this might be another reflection on the limitations imposed on the woman poet by her audience.

The second stanza turns outwards from this narcissistic demand for love (and art) as self-reflection, however, and figures the lyric speaker not as lover, but as a lyre, trembling under the breeze of a "deeper strain" and striving towards a "rich refrain." The production of song in the second stanza moves from being the result of a sweet singer mouthing the tune of an accompanist to a collaborative endeavour in which both learn from each other and participate in "The great refrain." Although initially the lyre-ic speaker marks his ownership of such deeper and richer music, "strain" and "refrain" are repeated in the *rentrement* without the possessive pronoun. Moreover, the refrain is modified from being an individual "rich" aesthetic good in the third line, into a site of collective chant with "The great refrain" at the end. The "great refrain" here – and indeed, in the formal structure of the text – alludes to the work of art as a communal endeavour for truth and beauty that repeats itself throughout history. If the singer finds "golden rhymes" to match the music of the speaker then both will participate in the communal aesthetic of "*the* deeper strain," "*the* great refrain" (emphasis mine). Whilst the first stanza proffers a poetics of compliance in which the sweet singer will be cherished for matching the tune of the times, the second stanza insists that a higher

alternative involves the singer joining the historic, choric "great refrain" even at the cost of losing the fleeting sweet songs of her individual voice.

In Radford's poem "Comrades" this ongoing struggle between the individuated affective figure of the woman poet and the demands of the greater communal refrain is given a sharp political inflection by the title of the work. It was during the 1880s and 90s that the term "Comrades" gained a particular association with revolutionary socialism as a non-hierarchical, unsexed denotation of fellow travellers, suggestive of a future ideal of fellowship. Morris's 1885 collection, *Chants for Socialists*, for instance, included the rowdy drinking song "Down among the Dead Men" that insists "Come, comrades, come, your glasses clink; / Up with your hands a health to drink" and condemns all "that will this health deny" to lie down among the dead men in the chorus (14). As Morris's *Chants* were frequently sung at meetings of the Socialist League and Hammersmith Socialist Society, Radford was doubtlessly aware of this vigorous celebration of "strife in hope while lasteth breath / And brotherhood in life and death." Against such collective, martial masculinity, the individual lyric speaker of Radford's poem hears from "afar the dire refrain" which beats upon the heart and brain of her distant comrades.

> What shall I do when you pass by
> And gaze at me so quietly,
> What shall I give of all my store,
> To help you to your joy once more!
>
> Some jewelled gift, some treasured thing,
> I had not meant for offering;
> Shall I not bid you take the whole
> Of what I prize, to heal your soul!
>
> For I have seen the lonely track,
> The cruel chasms, bitter black,
> The stony roads no pastures meet,
> Which you have pressed with bleeding feet.
>
> . . . . . .
> What shall I give you, what shall I say
> To help you on your lonely way,
> A kindly hand, a smile or so,
> A gentler glance – for all I know?
>
> May be a tender word or two,
> At most a prayer, or tear for you,
> And strength to tell you help is vain,
> Dead joys do never rise again.
> (Radford, *Songs* 51–4; Stanzas 1–3; 7–8)

Whereas Morris's "Down among the Dead Men" invokes a communal oral tradition with its double-couplet long meter, Radford's "Comrades" uses the same measure to probe the tensions between collective experience and aesthetic form. In an echo of Radford's earlier admission "never have I known a working man," the lyric speaker of "Comrades" is at an enforced distance from the onward march of these sufferers and reflects upon her own limited

capacity to contribute to the remedy. The speaker's "store" of goods that she can offer the comrades reads almost as the stock in trade of the female aesthete: "Some jewelled gift, some treasured thing" prized as an object of taste. But these individuated aesthetic works are rejected as insufficient defence against the "relentless days" ahead of the comrades. That aesthete's store of beauty does not, however, prevent her from engaging with the collective concerns of the comrades. The four central stanzas of this poem provide a sustained examination of four different means of access this feminised lyric subject has to the greater cause: she has "seen the lonely track" of poverty; she has "heard afar the dire refrain" of historically recurrent strife; she has "known the tears" which waste the "gold of life" from the individual; she has "pictured the relentless days" of a struggle "Stretching before you like a sea."

The final stanzas return to explore the resources of the lyric subject in alleviating the process of struggle. Rather than the aesthetic goods of the opening two stanzas, however, the text considers the value of sympathy and sentiment at its close and revisits the nineteenth-century tradition of feminine affective poetics. The first line of the penultimate stanza invokes the devotional tradition of the "gift," echoing, for example, Christina Rossetti's "In the Bleak Midwinter" and the first line of its final stanza, "What can I give Him / Poor as I am."[13] Rossetti's poem concludes, "Yet what I can I give Him / Give my heart" but it is this feminised Christian realm of the heart that is emphatically absent from the conclusion of Radford's verse. Tender words, prayers, and tears of poetic affect are alluded to as the inevitable, ineffective accompaniment of speech. That speech, however, must deconstruct the feminine poetic tradition of sympathy for the downtrodden: "help is vain" and the comrades must move onwards through their own struggles without the palliative hope of the better resurrection of "dead joys." In many ways this conclusion that "Dead joys do never rise again" reflects the decline of a millenarian spirit within the socialist movement in the early 1890s. The great demonstrations and strikes in London during the late 1880s had not, as so many activists like Morris and the Radfords hoped, led to a complete reorganisation of society five years later. Socialism could no longer be viewed as a romance in which desire for the beautiful would bring forth a second summer for the medieval guild system; a new life of communalism. The "strength" to tell the truth that "help is vain," that consciousness and long struggle alone could bring about social change, is a quality that resonates with twentieth century socialism. It is an analysis of the future struggle which also does something to explain why the publication of poetry in socialist journals tailed off as politics and aesthetics became increasingly distinct categories in the modernist era.

Radford's most substantial contribution to that carefully wrought product of *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism, John Lane's *Yellow Book*, works through the opposition of individuated feminine affect and the greater communal struggle that preoccupied "Comrades." "A Ballad of Victory" appeared in the *Yellow Book* in April 1896. The circumstances under which Radford was asked to contribute to the periodical serve as a reminder that socialism and aestheticism were never that distant from each other in the late nineteenth-century metropolis. Radford encountered Lane at the first night of George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* which she attended with Constance Garnett and a party of fellow Fabians. In between gawping at the "real Bulgarian admiral" in the Stepniaks' box and offering a critique of Shaw's play, Radford agreed to send the "lyric" Lane requested for the next edition of his work (Radford Diary April 1894). "A Ballad of Victory" was Radford's third contribution to the *Yellow Book* and by its very title it announces its formal divergence from the lyrics

Lane commissioned from her. The ballad employs the same trope of pilgrims, journeying the rough roads of suffering with bruised feet that appeared in Radford's poem, "Comrades." But the allegorical nature of "A Ballad of Victory" inverts the relationship between the individual and the communal, subject and object that structured the earlier poem and thus strives to find a means by which politics and aesthetics can continue to inform each other.

The formal properties of Radford's ballad invoke the customary culture of the oral tradition in which verse speaks from and for the commune. The narrative of "A Ballad of Victory" is thus carried by a collective voice of legend, rather than an individual lyric speaker, and concludes with a dialogue between an old woman and young man. Radford's accomplished prosody is evident in the very restraint of this sustained exercise in the ballad form. Despite its publication in the *Yellow Book* the poem refuses to call attention to itself as aesthetic artifice, focusing instead on the process of discovery in the narrative. The inhabitants of a mythic medieval walled town in the mountains marvel at the "tender ways" and "patient eyes" of a scarred traveller who visits their market. She is from distant lands but she refuses to share in the goods of their "bounteous days" and must move ever onwards on her journey.

> With quiet step and gentle face,
> With tattered cloak and empty hands,
> She came into the marketplace,
> A traveller from many lands.
> (Radford, *A Ballad of Victory* 7)

The commune comes together to speculate on the identity of the lone female traveller after her departure and unravel the contradiction between the marks on her body of "wounds so deep and old, / The cruel scars on her breast" and her "steadfast air." In the process of discovering her route and her name the townspeople construct a shared understanding that they too are fellow travellers on her road.

> And in their midst a woman rose,
> And said, "I do not know her name,
> Nor whose the land to which she goes,
> But well the roads by which she came."

The very refusal of the female pilgrim to identify herself and leave any trace other than the lingering affect of her love, requires the townspeople to interpret her self-abnegation for themselves. The answer is found by one "youth" gifted "With clearer eyes and wiser heart."

> "But stronger than the years that roll,
> Than travail past, or yet to be,
> She presses to her hidden goal,
> A crownless, unknown Victory."

Like the contemporaneous allegorical figure of George Frederick Watts's painting *Hope* (1886), Radford's Victory consists in a transitive state against all odds. Victory, like Hope, is not a final destination in Radford's work, but a process of becoming. The very act of

interpreting this feminine suffering body as Victory makes it so, on the part of the commune. In one sense, then, it is possible to read Radford's "A Ballad of Victory" as a poem that restates the ethical affect of the aesthetic in an era increasingly hostile to such analyses. Through the act of seeing, reading and interpreting a single woman's narrative of struggle, the commune can re-construct their individual experiences as shared victory-in-process. Morris's "Pilgrims of Hope" turned to epic and history to explore the self, the commune, and the transitive journey of revolution in the pages of the socialist journal *Commonweal*. Radford's allegorical ballad carried forward that question of the coming into being of communal consciousness through the process of struggle in the midst of the *Yellow Book*.

IV

Although the *Yellow Book* is so often deployed as a shorthand notation for the particularities of decadent aestheticism in the 1890s, a closer study reveals a more complex aesthetic at work. Linda Hughes has recently produced a valuable revisionist account of the "literary and sexual politics" of the *Yellow Book* that foregrounds what she terms "New Women" poets' use of the periodical "to intervene in contemporary debates via individual poems" (866). The stylistic diversity of the *Yellow Book* also requires some reassessment of the broad church of Lane's aesthetic interests. Radford's "A Ballad of Victory" in the *Yellow Book* IX (April 1896), for instance, is followed by the characteristically precious fragments of Richard Le Gallienne's "Four Prose Fancies" and framed by Sydney Meteyard's decadent painting, *Cupid*. T. Baron Russell's short story that precedes her ballad, however, is entitled "A Guardian of the Poor" and is closer to a sentimentalised George Gissing than any aestheticist work. John Lane's diverse mix of iconoclastic aestheticism and social realism thus offered Radford more space to work through her ethical aesthetics than might be expected from that confining rendition of her as poetess-aesthete on the frontispiece of Lane's *Songs and Other Verses* (1895).

Writing in her diary in 1893, Radford affirmed that she wanted to teach her children "to be socialists": "But that must come with serious thought – to belong to the struggling ones, & those who are at a disadvantage – to be true as light, tender & sweet as flowers – strong & firm as rock" (Radford Diary April 1893). Ernest Belfort Bax dismissed what he termed such "Sentimental socialism" as nothing other than a "morbid self-consciousness" which in other eras would be stimulated by "languishing and vapouring on art" rather than social reconstruction (*Religion of Socialism* 92). Yet Radford's ethical aesthetic refused to separate political consciousness from aesthetic receptivity, socialism from ethical affect. In the face of the increasing inscription of proto-modernist aesthetic autonomy and scientific socialism Radford sought to marry the "rock" of material determinism and the "sweetness" of ethical affect.

Royal Holloway, University of London

NOTES

1. For a recent reflection on the literary politics of the neglect and recovery of nineteenth-century women's poetry see Armstrong and Blain, eds. vii–xiv. See Armstrong, "Msrepresentations" 3–6, and Scheinberg 41–44 for two varied critiques of the "Whiggish" and "androcentric" critical models deployed by earlier feminist accounts of nineteenth-century women's poetry.

2. The men and women's club which Black and Radford were respectively Secretary and President of in 1883 was the subject of a coup by Karl Pearson in 1885 who reformulated the club as "The Men and Women's Club," dedicated to discussing questions of sexual identity. Neither Black nor Radford seceded with Pearson. For an account of this later club see Walkowitz 135–70 and Bland 3–47.
3. The public and acrimonious debate between the Marxist H. M. Hyndman of the Social Democratic Federation and the freethinking secularist, Charles Bradlaugh, in the summer of 1884 is often seen as the point of definitive break between an older radical tradition and "scientific" socialism. Edward Aveling (perhaps in a characteristic act of bigamy) continued to combine his commitment to Foote's *Progress* with work for his newer, scientific, socialist interest, the magazine, *Today*, throughout the 1880s: a combination that underscores the pluralism of the late-nineteenth-century socialist movement.
4. Radford selected five of these nine poems for *A Light Load* eight years later.
5. Ernest Radford and Eleanor Marx had a spirited exchange in the pages of *Progress* in late 1883 concerning absolute atheism. Radford declared his "variance with the bellicose atheists in England" and his "sympathy with the Russian Nihilists in their struggle" for ethical "truth." Marx dismissed such temporising as the characteristic bourgeois trait of putting prudence before valour. Both claimed that Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* (1883) supported their own views. Neither of the Radfords had any more work published in the journal. See Ernest Radford 300–03; Eleanor Marx 370–72.
6. The clinching evidence for Bax's argument concerning the evident mental inferiority of women was that one had recently survived falling off the Clifton Suspension Bridge – a piece of logic which Annie Besant had considerable fun with in her witty response to Bax the following month.
7. The title of Bax's work is rather a Trojan horse, since the "religion of socialism" was most often associated with the very form of socialism that Bax dismisses as "Sentimental." This particular section was first published as "Unscientific Socialism" in *Today* 1.3 (March 1884): 192–204.
8. We might read the title of the poem as a not-so-subtle pun in this context, given that Nesbit's husband, Hubert Bland, was soon to take over the editorship of *Today* himself. In the later 1880s, under the influence of the Blands, *Today* edged away from supporting the Marxist socialism of the SDF towards the state socialism of the Fabian Society.
9. See Minutes and Papers of the Hammersmith Socialist Society, British Library Add. Mss. 45891.
10. See *Fabian News* 2.3 (May 1892). Emma Brooke opposed the motion for a quota of women on the executive.
11. See Stansky 171–262 for the history of the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions Society. Ernest Radford was appointed secretary of the Society in April 1888 for a salary of £175 p.a. He was replaced by Sidney Cockerell in 1893.
12. See also Alford.
13. "In the Bleak Midwinter" was the first text in the "Devotional Poems" section of Rossetti's collection *Poems* (1875).

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